2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

262 records taken during a plentiful season showed that only five different relishes were used on an average during a period of twenty-three days. Only one cultivator had stored or gathered as many as nine different forms of *umunani*, and he was a man of unusual intelligence. At another village in the hunger season four out of six families ate mushrooms only with their porridge for five days out of six, and this was considered usual at that time of year. Mrs. Gore-Browne states that in the thirty-two villages she visited between July and January *katapa*, the relish made from cassava leaves, was practically the only food eaten. Whether the Bemba really suffer more severely from monotony of diet than the average English working-class family I do not know. Bread, butter, jam, tea, meat, and vegetables probably recur with the same frequency in such households as do millet, porridge and relish in that of the Bemba. Nor is it easy to know whether a monotonous diet is harmful in itself if it is well balanced, but it is certainly in times of shortage of millet that the native [435] complains of the lack of variety. At this season I have seen Bemba pay quite exorbitant prices for dried fish bought from a passing trader 'because we are so sick of eating pumpkin'. It would seem that a kind of despair had set in, and in this mood they were willing to pay anything to get a change of food, however bad the bargain they were making.[1]

(*f*) *Foods and social status*. Finally, the Bemba, like ourselves, have attached a kind of snobbish value to different foodstuffs. This is roughly correlated with the traditional beliefs in the strength and staying power of the dishes, but not entirely. As 262 presents of honour, beer may be given, unthreshed millet, meat, 431 fish, or honey. But it is almost an insult to give a man of rank a basket of maize. I once saw the late Nkula presented with such food by some villagers when travelling round his district, but he gave it contemptuously to the children of his retinue. Citimukulu also passed through a village where I was staying during a month of scarcity after locust raids. The people knew he was short of relish for his followers but did not dare to offer him caterpillars—their only supply that day—in public. His wives had to beg surreptitiously behind closed doors.

262 Roughly speaking, uncultivated plants are less highly thought of than cultivated. Some of the wild leaf relishes really are

[1] Cf. also Chap. XII on trading habits.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

stringy and bitter to the taste, but the fact that these plants grow wild also tends to make them despised. For instance the wild orchid (*icikanda*) gathered by the children in September is considered with special contempt. A passing Lunda bragging to some Bemba villagers about the superior wealth and civilization of his own people, clinched the argument by saying, 'In our country we just divorce our wives if they serve *icikanda* relish, whereas yours have to cook it every day.' The burrowing cricket (*nyense*) and the mice, moles, or small birds which little boys trap are also despised. 'Food for children and for women in the hunger months' is an expression often used of such foods with an expression of contempt.

European foods are used only in the villages round white settlements and then apparently entirely for their kudos value, or else their ease in preparation.[1] Such articles are chiefly limited to tea, coffee, sugar, bread, and sardines. They seemed to me to be eaten as extras, used for purposes of entertainment or display, rather than an essential part of the diet, but the habit may have become more common since my visit to the area in 1934. Then clerks and native storekeepers in the Kasama townships used to be carried trays of tea in the middle of the morning by their wives, and in a neighbouring village I have seen four young men, after eating their ordinary meal of porridge and relish, sit down to share a tin of sardines on a table spread in full view of the community and ornamented with empty whisky bottles. They were described as having a 'sundowner'. In the same year a successful dance club run by an enterprising native returned from the mines, sold lemonade at 3*d*. a glass (i.e. a whole day's wages) and scones made from white flour in preference to supplying beer. It is purely want of money which prevents the extension of such customs in the modern type of village.

Magico-Religious Attitudes to Food.

(*a*) *Food taboos.* The whole question of food taboos has bulked very largely in anthropological literature from the earliest days. Such ritual restrictions on diet seem to have struck the attention of European observers immediately, and there is no doubt that where a particular class of food is tabooed permanently to a whole community or to a large section of it, such as a clan, age-grade, or

[1] Bread is liked chiefly for the latter reason I think.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

the old custom of giving the father of the girl two or more bark-cloths. In 144 marriage contracts I recorded small sums of money were paid in 86 cases, i.e. 59 per cent., and in six villages where I made marriage censuses an average of 6*s*. 6*d*. was paid for the *mpango* of the girl. The old bark-cloths were replaced by calico cloths, and many *mpango* are still paid in this fashion, and later by the money to buy the cloth. The 10*s*. given the father-in-law as the 'money to cut the trees' is merely the wage for a month's work at European rates.

Baskets, pots, axes, and other objects made by the Bemba craftsmen were always paid for by goods in kind or by service, and for these dues money has been nearly everywhere substituted. Even then, the purchase is not subject to the ordinary laws of demand and supply, since once the regulation sum for a basket or a pot has been fixed at 3*d*. or 6*d*. there it will remain, however scarce the materials of which it is made.

The use of money in Bemba ritual life is largely due to its rarity value. It has the prestige of an object that comes from a foreign country and which is possessed by few members of the community. Before the arrival of the white man it is clear that articles that came from far off, brought by Arabs, or sent as presents to the chiefs, had a particular value, and were kept as presents of honour or marks of status. Hence they were considered particularly suitable as offerings to the ancestral spirits. The use of bark-cloth for this purpose was common here as in other parts of Bantu Africa, but it was not the local bark-cloth that was hung on the shrine of the ancestor, but the valuable calico brought by Arab traders. In the same way I have seen barrels of guns stuck in the ground over the grave of a chief (Cilubi Island on Lake Bangweolu) and have been asked by the Paramount for china plates for the same purpose. He told me that plates or tea-pots had been offered to the spirits in this way in the old days because they were 'valuables' (*ifyuma*) and because 'we had not seen any before'. Cattle taken in war were also considered necessary for some ancestral sacrifices, although the Bemba are not a pastoral people. Money has apparently acquired a similar rarity value which it has not yet lost. A present of a coin is appreciated not only on its own account but because of the kudos it gives. Most Europeans hesitate to give money as a present to an equal or to a superior because it is a currency used for the ordinary run of economic transactions, and therefore seems to give a

2:Richards / E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

437 forging of iron axe-blades or spear-heads—exchange their articles for goods, service, or money. But I never met a man who traded regularly in this fashion, who lived on the proceeds of his industry, or who travelled about the country selling his wares. In fact, the greatest initiative I ever noted was shown by one of Citimukulu's old hereditary priests, who sold baskets to villagers for chickens, and then sold the latter, ten or twelve at a time, to Europeans.

439 Trade with Europeans consists for the main part of sales of grain to the Government stations or missions. In 1934 the price varied from ½*d.* a lb. during harvest months to 1½*d.* during the rainy season [435] in the Chinsali area. The Government station at Mpika also bought £140 of salt at 1*d.* a lb. But it is difficult to estimate the total amount of food sold over the whole area.

437 To conclude, it can be said that the Bemba, owing to their particular environment and social organization, reckon to live by means of mutual support within their kinship groups, and only resort to the barter or sale of the goods they need sporadically, or on occasions of necessity. Then either temperament or their patterns of economic thought make them extraordinarily inept, according to European standards. Marketing, like any other form of economic activity, is evidently based on a system of values developed in earliest youth, and the trading instinct seems to be difficult to acquire by a people who have not been through such a training.

437 184 The contrast between Bemba children and those of the Bisa of the fishing villages in the Bangweolu swamps is striking. There the children are accustomed from earliest infancy to hear the sales of fish and other commodities discussed, and I found that they themselves continually talked of the values of different objects, and even of their own services. When I asked them to do something for me they replied automatically, 'How much will you give me? Yes, but what kind of beads and how many?' Having struck their bargain, they kept to it. The Bemba children, on the other hand, accepted such requests for help by politely clapping their hands, as to a chief. They never bargained or refused, but on the other hand they considered their services made me liable to help them and feed them, and they were constantly on the look-out for their dues. They left the work if they became convinced, for some reason or other, that I did not 'like' them. In Bemba society economic transactions are based on a system of personal relationships—ties

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba

423 In the land-tenure map in the Appendix it will be seen that 32 owners continue to cultivate their old *ifitantala* or house-sites after moving to a new site adjoining the abandoned one.

As land can never be permanently owned by one individual the laws of inheritance only apply in a restricted sense. If a man dies his near relatives can reap his crop and continue to use the garden [425] site as long as they please. After that it reverts to bush. I know no case of land having been sold even in the areas near white settlement. A man can sell the whole of the crops of his garden, and even the branches piled before burning, but never the ground. The sale of crops is becoming fairly common near Kasama where there is a good deal of movement from one village to another. [435] A garden of cut trees might fetch £1 to £2 and the beans off a big patch about 10s.

Conclusion.

In conclusion it can be said that each individual Bemba has freedom to select ground for cultivation as against the rights of his chief and his fellow commoners. While no individual ownership of land is recognized in our sense of the word, yet each individual has security of tenure in so far as he requires it in regard to a kinship system which permits of frequent moving from village to village, and methods of agriculture which only allow him to cultivate a garden for four or five years.

The question of the future of the traditional system of land tenure raises a number of practical points. It is possible that fixed methods of cultivation will be adopted before long by the Bemba, and it is often argued that the native will not improve his cultivation while he has no fixed rights of ownership over his land. But the foregoing pages should show that it is not insecurity of tenure which is keeping the Bemba from further agricultural development. In fact the introduction of individual tenure and the sale or lease of land would only be of value to the Bemba, as to other Bantu peoples, as a measure of protection against land-hungry Europeans should these become a danger. As elsewhere, the concept of land as a saleable commodity will revolutionize native society. In the case of the chief, land ownership will be severed from political responsibility,[1] and the commoner will acquire the right to exploit

[1] Cf. L. P. Mair's account of the state of affairs among the Ganda where the Uganda agreement of 1900 resulted in 'the almost complete dissociation of

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

226 227 *Mamba* are used (*a*) in backwaters of big rivers (*ifishiba*) in March; (*b*) on the flats about 400 feet from the river edge as the waters fall in April and May; (*c*) in the same dikes, with the traps reversed to catch the fish as they leave the main stream to breed in January, if the rain is not so heavy that it sweeps them away at once (*ukucilule mbelo*); (*d*) in the main body of the stream (*umulongo*) in May, in small rivers only.

Large numbers of fish are only caught by the trap method near the big rivers, but a sufficient number of small fish are picked up by the banks of streams to make a welcome variety in the diet.

4. *Weirs* (*icansa*, plur. *ifyansa*). *Mono* traps may also be set in weirs made of sticks and reeds placed across the big streams where there is a certain amount of current driving the fish into the traps (*uku milongo* or *ku mukuku*). These weirs include: (*a*) the permanent variety, such as are found on the Chambesi River in November and December; (*b*) semi-permanent weirs built to last for three years or so, or until the sand sifts up by the current; (*c*) temporary weirs built hurriedly to block up the current in a big river for a fish poisoning expedition, in which case traps are used. A much bigger variety of *mono* traps, about eight feet long and three feet in diameter, known as *banasabila* or *mumange* are used.[1] These weirs are in use in November and December until the crocodiles become a menace to the fishers. Thus the season is limited, but the method is very simple, and many of the larger varieties of fish are caught.

226 [184] 227 286 5. *Nets* (*amasumbu*). In the main body of a river natives catch fish by nets. Unlike the Bisa, who make about eleven different types of fishing net, the Bemba maintain that they only use one, with the occasional addition of small accessory nets (*akalenge*). The nets are made of twisted bark rope (*ulushishi*). The maker first digs up the roots of the *lwimbi* bush and hammers these out, removing the internal fibres. These he dries and then damps again, and finally frays off fine threads which are rolled together between finger and thumb into a very thin string. This latter is rolled on to a ball and used with a wooden threader to tat the net. [435] It is said to take about three months to make a complete net, which is then four feet deep and twenty-five yards long, and sold for about three shillings. Nets are indivjdually owned, and belong to men only.

226 227 The usual method of net fishing is known as *ukusoa*, the word

[1] I saw these used on the Luansenshi and Chambesi.

2:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1939
FQ5 Bemba FQ5

(*d*) *Spears, bows, dogs, and guns.* The Bemba occasionally hunt in twos and threes with spears and dogs. Trained dogs are very valuable—about 10*s.*—and hard to buy. I never saw hunters go out with dogs, but I know that they are extremely skilful in throwing spears at a distance of about twenty feet, and that they sometimes kill small duiker in this manner. Bows and arrows are carried by very old men only and used to shoot at monkeys raiding gardens. A bow is handed down ceremoniously to a dead man's heir but is not often used in the hunt. It is the ambition of every native to own a muzzle-loading gun, which he can purchase for about 30*s.* and obtain a Government licence to use. Many Bemba still go to the mines for no other purpose than to earn the money for a gun, which seems to promise security and prestige in their old age. However, many of these guns are in fact more deadly to the hunter than to the quarry, since they are rammed with shot, slag iron, and rusty nails till the long-suffering barrels explode. It is unlikely that many buck are killed in this way.

European rifles are owned only by hunters employed by Europeans, or chiefs. The Bemba are said to be skilled trackers and think nothing of spending two or three days in pursuit of game. Game which is killed with a gun is the property of the shooter, to divide as he pleases, after he has given a portion to the nearest headman or chief. There is no special ritual attached to shooting, although the hunter may ask a blessing from the headman if he wishes, and in any case calls on his *imipashi* and carries magic charms.

(*e*) *Elephant hunters.* The Bemba elephant hunters were typical magician-specialists (*ifibinda*), i.e. they possessed both skill and the magic necessary to give them success. Elephants were killed formerly by the aid of weighted spears of specially heavy make by hunters known as *bashimunini*, with dogs and spears and large crowds of beaters by another type of hunter known as *bakalongwe*, or with guns traded from the Arabs by those called *Bafundi*. Nowadays elephant hunters only work for the Government or for certain big chiefs with special permission. The ordinary native is allowed to kill an elephant only when it is actually raiding his garden.

All elephant hunters were under the direct control of the chief in the old days, and he had the monopoly of the ivory so obtained. The chief summoned the hunters, but they were led by the *icibinda*.

9: Richards E-5 (1930-1934) 1935 FQ5 Bemba FQ5

apparently always unmasked. 'Look under the roof of his granary,' the *Bamucapi* would cry in case of a denial by the sorcerer, and there the hidden danger would be immediately brought to light. 'We know they made no mistakes', was the significant comment of natives, 'because the men and women they spotted as sorcerers were people we had been afraid of all along!'

But with the detection of the sorcerer a cure was provided. Each man and woman drank a sip of the famous *mucapi* medicine—a fine red powder which gave a soapy solution when shaken with water in a bottle—the name of the witch-finders being said to come from the Cinyanja word *kucapa*, to rub or wash clothes. For this medicine the claim of the *Bamucapi* was staggering. It was nothing less than the complete removal of witchcraft from the territory. A man who had drunk the *mucapi* medicine, and then returned to his evil practices, was liable to instant death—a grisly death in which he was to swell to enormous proportions, his limbs crinkled with dropsy, and his body too heavy to be carried to the grave. Nor could a cunning sorcerer escape by refusing to pass in front of the magic mirror. He would merely be caught at a kind of second coming of the founder of the movement, who was to return beating a mysterious drum outside each village at night. At its sound all witches and wizards as yet undetected would be compelled to follow to the graveyard where their crimes would be finally unmasked. Some told also of the coming of a mythical woman with one breast in front and one behind. The good she would suckle in front, while the wicked would find themselves following willynilly behind. Such stories were told and retold in the villages with the myth of the original Kamwende, who, it was said, had received his revelation in the grave from which he had been resurrected after two days, with one eye, one arm, and one leg powerless, but with the secret of the *mucapi* medicine and the power to resist poisons of all kinds.

As a secondary object the *Bamucapi* sold protective charms, pinches of powder sewn up in small cloth bags. For 3*d*. charms could be bought against wild beasts and snakes, for 6*d*. powder to protect the gardens from animal pests, for 6*d*. a charm for luck and success, and for 5*s*., it was rumoured, a charm for winning the favour of the local Government official. 'But you can see for yourself', my informant added, 'that very few natives have had as much money to spend as that!'